THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (DR. AKHILESH PRASAD SINGH): (a) and (b) No, Sir.

(c) The Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill, 2005 has been introduced in the Parliament in December, 2005 to enable the Government to prune the list of Essential Comodities to the minimum by deleting such commodities which are no longer relevant in the context of present improved supply position, and to facilitate free trade and commerce. Only those commodities considered essential, or which are in the interest of the farmers and the large section of people below poverty line, are proposed to be retained as essential commodities, while giving powers to the Central Govt, to add, remove or modify any essential commodity in public interest, when there is scarcity.

Recently, the Government has taken a decision to import 35 lakh tones of wheat in order to make up the shortfall of wheat stocks in the Central Pool caused by low procurement of wheat in Rabi Marketing Season 2006-07.

Review of food policy

444. SHRIMATI S G. INDIRA: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government are considering to review the food policy in view of the lower than expected food production of foodgrains, low procurement of wheat, etc;

(b) if so, the details thereof:

(c) whether it is also a fact that the multinationals and private players have taken undue advantage of liberal policy; and

(d) if so, the corrective steps being proposed by Government?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (DR. AKHILESH PRASAD SINGH): (a) to (d) As per the existing procurement policy the Government agencies (FCI and State Agencies) carry out Minimum Support Price (MSP) operations in all areas of the country having

marketable surplus of foodgrains The farmer is free to sell his produce to the Government agencies at MSP or to the private traders, as is advantageous to him.

In the last Rabi Marketing Season (RMS) 2006-07, there has been more active participation by multinationals and private players.

A proposal to purchase foodgrains at a rate higher than the MSP has been formulated in the Department of Food and Public Distribution.

Shortage in wheat procurement

445. SHRI MOTILAL VORA:
MS SUSHILA TIRIYA:

Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) the quantum of buffer stock in lakh tonnes during the current year;

(b) whether it is a fact that in spite of official procurement of wheat, the buffer stock has not been met;

(c) whether the shortage is likely to have an impact on the rural employment scheme;

(d) if so, the steps Government are taking to avoid such a situation; and

(e) the reasons for less official procurement of wheat?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (DR. AKHILESH PRASAD SINGH): (a) The actual stock of foodgrairis vis-a-vis buffer norms are as under:—

(Fig. in lakh tonnes)

As on	Buffer Norms		Actual Stock	
	Wheat	Rice	Wheat	Rice
1.4.06	40.00	122.00	20.09	136.73
1.7.06	171.00	98.00	82.07	111.44